



SPECIAL CONCESSION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SAICA PART I - IAC EXAMINATIONS

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1 – 3	October 2007 (MO, LK)	Original document approved EDCO Oct 2007
4	November 2008 (MO, LK)	Clarification to process
5	July 2013 (BM, MO, HB)	Inclusion of fee
5	Aug 2014 (JC, IM)	Updated for reference to IAC & formatting
6	January 2020	Updated types of assessments
7	August 2020 (JC)	Amended policy on documentation needed for application purposes and date of application submission.

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1. SAICA'S PURPOSE AND THE ROLE OF THE QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS

The principal purpose of SAICA is to uphold the standards of the Chartered Accountant (CA) designation and provide a professional home body for qualified CAs. The maintenance of standards is particularly important in the light of the role performed by CAs in society and the immense trust that is placed in CAs by virtue of their qualification.

One of the ways in which SAICA performs this important function is through the setting and administration of a test of core competence, the INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE (IAC).

2. GRANTING OF SPECIAL CONCESSIONS

SAICA, in recognising that not all candidates may be able to reflect their true ability under normal examination conditions, offers special concessions to candidates with certain permanent or temporary physical impairments or specific learning disabilities.

This policy relates to special concessions granting for INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE (IAC)

The examinations assess the core competence of a candidate to apply defined concepts and principles in an integrated and analytical manner to a standard that provides a foundation appropriate for further professional development. In addition, the examinations test the ability of the candidate to effectively answer questions within a limited period of time. Time within the examinations serves to ensure that the candidate is able to demonstrate a level of knowledge which is easily accessible and communicable. Without a time limit, one cannot fully assess the knowledge and ability of the candidate. Displaying a significant depth of core knowledge and the ability to communicate it is one of the core skills that the examinations test.

It is SAICA's policy that persons who qualify to write the SAICA examinations are not excluded from the opportunity to pass the examination in question due to certain learning disabilities or physical impairments.

SAICA assesses, through processes that are thorough and transparent, the appropriate concessions available to candidates who apply for special consideration.

All applications for special concessions are subject to careful assessment and must be supported by rigorous documentation. **SPECIAL CONCESSION REQUESTS ARE ALWAYS CONSIDERED, BUT NOT AUTOMATICALLY GRANTED.** The granting of special concessions is a privilege, not a right.

Within the context of the candidate's learning path,¹ the objective of the examination and the form² of the examination, SAICA endeavours to provide concessions that are reasonable and seek to minimise the impact of the disability and **not provide an advantage over other candidates**. The same examining standards are set for candidates with disabilities as those applied to all other candidates. No concessions will be made regarding the assessment criteria used **or language of learning**.

SAICA is under no circumstances obliged to give candidates the same concessions as that received at their tertiary educational institution (university).

SAICA will evaluate the evidence provided and make an independent decision to that of the university.

SAICA makes decisions with regard to the concessions in the context of a professional examination for prospective CAs who are required to be assessed against the competencies set out in the competency framework.

2.1 The nature of special concessions

Depending on the disability, special concessions available may include, inter alia, the following:

- The use of special equipment such as a computer, specialised keyboard, etc.
- Use of an amanuensis/scribe
- Use of a reader
- Specialised printing of the examination paper, such as an enlarged font, coloured background or varied spacing
- Examinations in alternative forms such as audiotape, Braille, text to speech
- Separate examination venue
- Special seating arrangements
- A 'stop the clock' concession. This concession allows the candidate the opportunity of having the exam time clock stopped for a specified time (time is dependent on the nature of the disorder) in order to rest, stretch, take medication or use the bathroom.
- Additional writing time. Time in the examinations, in the context of the expected competencies and the open-book format adopted by SAICA, becomes a critical success factor for all candidates. SAICA will, therefore, only grant additional time in circumstances where no other viable alternative is appropriate. Additional time granted will be **per examination** and **not per hour**.
- Additional reading time. This allows the candidate additional time to read the scenarios before starting to write the examination and does not necessarily include additional examination writing time.

¹ In order to gain admission to the IAC a candidate must have completed a three-year BCom accounting degree or equivalent at a tertiary educational institution and after graduating complete the Post Graduate Diploma in Accounting (PGDA), at a SAICA accredited tertiary educational institution.

² The IAC comprises of four two-and-a-half hour papers set over two days. The examination is open-book in nature and allows candidates limited access within a limited time span.

2.2 Conditions under which candidates may apply for special concessions

Any Specific Learning Disorder,³ like a reading disorder (previously known as Dyslexia), that may limit the candidate's ability to successfully demonstrate his/her core competence within the allocated time period and the format of the examination. This definition **excludes** conditions which can be neutralised through physical aids or controlled by medical treatment.

Any physiological difficulties that may impinge upon a candidate's ability to successfully demonstrate his/her core competence within the allocated time and format of the examination.

3. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

3.1 All applications for special concessions must be submitted to the Exams Department of SAICA by email at support@saica.co.za.

3.2 SAICA must receive the application no later than **the date as set out and updated annually on the SAICA website** (regardless of whether the candidate applies for the IAC written in January or June) of the year **preceding the year** in which the candidate will write the IAC.

3.3 No late applications will be accepted for Special Concessions that existed **before the deadline date as stipulated on the SAICA website**. (regardless of whether the candidate applies for the IAC written in January or June).

3.4 Should unforeseen circumstances arise after the deadline date, as stipulated on SAICA website, **application for new conditions should be made by the dates as stipulated on the SAICA website**.

3.5 SAICA also will consider applications **as early as the beginning of a candidate's PGDA**. Such applications must be submitted to SAICA no later than **deadline date specified on SAICA website**, of their PGDA year, after which applications will only be considered after the closing date as stipulated in paragraph 3.2.

3.6 A **non-refundable application fee of R517.50** is payable with each application. When submitting an application, the applicant must submit proof of payment of the application fee.

3.7 In certain circumstances, an applicant may be required to, in addition to paying the application fee, contribute towards the costs of assessing the application. A decision that an applicant should make a contribution shall be final.

³ The term "Learning Disabilities" covers any impairment to the learning of competencies or the demonstration of competencies.

3.8 SAICA may in exceptional circumstances and in its sole and absolute discretion waive the application fee on receipt of a written request from an applicant to that effect.

3.9 Application for special concessions must be made on the prescribed application form (Annexure 4) with full supporting documentation.

3.10 Full supporting documentation must include the following, as applicable to the applicant's condition:

3.10.1 Reports from medical practitioners, psychologists, occupational therapists and other specialists must demonstrate how the difficulty hinders the candidate during examination conditions. Where psychometric assessments are used, **standardised scores must be included in the report and the complete and full reports must be provided.**

3.10.2 Physical difficulties: comprehensive assessment and report by a suitable specialist (such as an occupational therapist, orthopaedic surgeon, etc) indicating how the physical impairment hinders the candidate's performance under normal examination conditions. Recommendations should include specific apparatus (such as seating arrangements, etc) required by the candidate. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure this apparatus is available in the allocated venue and ready to use on the dates of the examinations.

3.10.3 For the following Psychological conditions more specific information is required:

i. **Psychiatric conditions (anxiety or mood disorders)**

Specific diagnostic criteria (DSM-V5) must be present and have been diagnosed by a psychiatrist or psychologist. Evidence of drug interventions and therapy must also be provided in the report. Proof of how the disorder affects the candidate's abilities must be available: this can include a psycho- educational assessment or psychological assessment (depending on the nature of the disorder); findings must verify how the disorder affects the candidate's functioning during an examination and **how the candidate performs under examination conditions while using medication** (where prescribed). Annexure 5 details types of assessments which could be included in a psycho-educational assessment.

ii. **Specific Learning Disorders**

Psycho-educational assessment including an IQ-test as well as timed and untimed reading and writing assessments. Specific diagnostic criteria must be included together with all relevant standardised scores and evidence of previous remedial interventions. See Annexure 5 for types of assessments which could be considered.

iii. **Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without Hyperactivity)**

Evidence of previous interventions and evidence that concentration is in fact impacting negatively on performance and that concentration levels are difficult to control. Proof can be in the form of a psycho-educational assessment including an IQ-test, timed and untimed reading and writing assessments, findings must verify how the disorder affects the candidate's functioning during an examination and **how the candidate performs under examination conditions while using medication** (where prescribed). No concessions will be given without clear evidence that the disorder is not under control by means of drug interventions. See Annexure 5 for types of assessments which could be considered.

3.10.4 A history of the condition, including recent medical reports from a relevant registered specialist (**not older than three years**) with specific diagnostic data (test results). The supporting documentation must also include evidence of previous interventions and their outcome, for example, drug or remedial interventions. Your practitioner or specialist must be specific in this report as to the nature of the problem, its duration and likely effects. Within the context of the disability, an indication of the type of concession (see section 2.1) and, only if relevant, a recommendation for the amount of extra time needed, should also be included.

These recommendations will be considered in the panel's assessment however, the panel is not bound by the recommendations made by the practitioner or specialist.

3.10.5 A declaration from the relevant practitioner stating that all the information in their reports and letters is true and correct. Letters of declaration can be downloaded from the SAICA website (www.saica.co.za).

3.10.6 A history of any previous concessions or accommodations granted and relevant documentation relating to the nature of the concession must be provided.

3.11 All applications with supporting evidence will be considered by a SAICA appointed advisory panel comprising of an educational psychologist or educational expert, one or more practising CA(SA) professionals, a medical doctor, an Initial Professional Development (IPD) Committee member and a member of the SAICA secretariat. The advisory panel is appointed by SAICA's IPD Committee and will act on behalf of the IPD Committee in making special concession decisions.

3.11.1 The candidate's application is considered based on the information submitted. It is the candidate's responsibility to read and ensure that he/she fully comprehends SAICA's special concessions policy. **Applications will be declined in the case of insufficient information.**

- 3.11.2 All applications for a special concession are reviewed by the advisory panel after the closing date for applications (as stipulated on the SAICA website) regardless of whether the candidate applies for the IAC written in first or second sitting of the following year), with the exception of paragraph 3.5;
- 3.11.3 Applications made at the start of a candidate's PGDA, prior to 28 February, will be reviewed by the panel in March to allow for application at PGDA assessments/exams, should the university permit and
- 3.11.4 The advisory panel will discuss and review all information presented in the candidate's application and then provide an opinion to SAICA regarding the special concessions that should be afforded.
- 3.12 It is the candidate's responsibility to supply **all supporting documentation**, and ensure that the reports are relevant and comprehensive. SAICA will not source documentation on the candidate's behalf. SAICA reserves the right to make its own enquiries to verify the authenticity of documentation or the substance of a candidate's case.
- 3.13 Candidates are reminded that the submission of fraudulent documents may result in disciplinary action and may lead to a severe penalty, such as disqualification from the examination (see the SAICA Code of Conduct).
- 3.14 SAICA may under exceptional circumstances require a candidate to undergo further specialised testing or assessment with an appropriate specialist, appointed by SAICA. Should this be the case, SAICA will cover all reasonable costs associated to this special request.
- 3.15 SAICA's decision with regard to the granting of special concessions will be communicated to the applicant via email at least six weeks prior to the first IAC following the receipt of the application, to ensure opportunity for appeal and exam preparation, if necessary. With exception of those applications received for new conditions prior to the exam (see paragraph 3.4, which the panel will endeavour to communicate a week after the 28th of February.
- 3.16 Concessions granted by SAICA are applicable for the first and second sitting of IAC of the year after receiving the application. (i.e. concession awarded for application received in October 2020, will be applicable for the first and second sitting in 2021)

New applications must be made for any examinations that will be written in any other year (i.e. a new application needs to be made for a concession for the IAC, for the next year if the candidate failed the second sitting of IAC for that year).

Depending on the condition, the panel reserve the right to apply an expiry date for the concession, which will be clearly communicated to candidate on awarding the concession.

- 3.17 On notification of a special concession from SAICA, candidates are required to sign and return the terms and conditions applicable to the concession granted. Failure to return a signed copy of the terms and conditions may result in a candidate's concession being revoked.
- 3.18 Candidates wishing to file an appeal against the decision made regarding their application for special concessions must file a formal appeal notice via email at support@saica.co.za to the Lead: Examinations **within seven days of receipt of the concession notice**.
- 3.19 Candidates must provide additional supporting documentation and detailed justification for their appeal, obtained at their own cost.
- 3.20 Upon receipt of the formal appeal, all letters of justification and supporting documentation with regard to the candidate are considered by the original panel and two independent IPD Committee members who will constitute the appeal panel for review. The appeal panel will consider the candidates' appeal in the light of the candidate's submission and **new supporting evidence/documentation**.

The appeal panel's decision is final.

ANNEXURE 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to IFAC⁴ member bodies have legal, business and moral reasons to ensure candidates with disabilities have reasonable access to their profession. IFAC encourages member bodies to strive to provide reasonable accommodation to persons with proven disabilities to minimise or eliminate the impact of the disability in order to

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- meet any legal requirements in their jurisdiction;
- attract as members all persons with the intellect and capacity to be professional accountants; • demonstrate openness, transparency and caring to their communities; and
- do what is morally “right”.

Disabilities, according to IFAC, should be addressed in four parts:

1. Establish a written policy.
2. Establish a process for identification and assessment of candidates with disabilities.
3. Establish provisions and administrative arrangements for reasonable accommodation of those proven disabilities.
4. Establish a review cycle and evaluation approach to periodically reassess the policy and the procedures.

An investigation by SAICA of a sample of professional bodies⁵ and local institutes⁶ revealed the following:

- All the bodies and institutes investigated offer special concessions (time and other) to their candidates and have written policies and procedures to facilitate the process.
- All policies under review seek to establish equality and not give unfair advantage.
- Special concession applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis with relevant consideration given to the supporting medical information provided.
- The special concession policies under review assess the type of concession to be granted within the context of the examination, i.e. the form, length and purpose.
- All policies reviewed provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate most forms of physical impairments and learning disabilities.
- There is a similarity of approach to disabilities in the applicable legislation in South Africa, the United Kingdom, America and Australia. Each jurisdiction requires that the disability must be a physical or mental impairment, and that it substantially limits everyday activities.

⁴ International Education Paper, October 2001: Accommodation of candidates with disabilities.

⁵ Institute of Chartered Accountants England and Wales, Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland, Institute of Chartered Accountants Hong Kong, Institute of Chartered Accountants Ontario, New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants.

⁶ Independent Examination Board, Gauteng Department of Education, Health Professional Council, the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors, the University of the Witwatersrand.

ANNEXURE 2: LEGAL ISSUES

The following section highlights local legislation relevant to the development of SAICA's special concessions policy.

1. The right to equality

The right to equality is governed by both the Constitution and *the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000* ("the Equality Act").

The right to equality is entrenched in section 9 of the Constitution, the relevant portion of which provides that:

"(4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, [including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth]. National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination."

Subsection 9(4) envisages that persons other than the state (such as SAICA) may not engage in unfair discrimination (the so-called horizontal application of the Bill of Rights). The prohibited grounds of discrimination expressly include race and disability.

Following the lead of the Constitution, section 6 of the Equality Act imposes a general prohibition against discrimination. This section stipulates that neither the state nor any person may engage in unfair discrimination. Two requirements must be met for a contravention of this prohibition, namely (a) that it constitutes discrimination (b) which is unfair.

Section 13 of the Equality Act creates a fairly elaborate mechanism for the burden of proof in equality matters. For purposes of this document, the relevant provisions of this section have been included:

- a) If the complainant makes out a *prima facie* case of discrimination, the respondent must prove that the discrimination did not take place or that the conduct is not based on a prohibited ground; and
- b) If the discrimination took place on a ground in paragraph (a) of the definition of "prohibited grounds" (i.e. a ground of discrimination that is specifically

listed), the respondent bears the onus of proving that the discrimination is fair.

Accordingly, if a complainant succeeds in making out a *prima facie* case that the special concessions policy amounts to discrimination, SAICA will effectively bear the onus of proving either that its practice does not amount to discrimination on a prohibited ground or that such discrimination is not unfair.

Two further aspects of the Equality Act are of relevance to SAICA's special concessions policy: section 28(2) provides that the state, institutions performing public functions and all persons, have a duty and responsibility to eliminate discrimination and promote equality on grounds of race, gender and disability. In addition, institutions performing public functions (which would include SAICA) must

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- i) audit laws, policies and practices with a view to eliminating all discriminatory aspects thereof;
- ii) ... develop progressive policies and initiate codes of practice in order to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and disability...
- iii) give priority to the elimination of unfair discrimination and the promotion of equality in respect of race, gender and disability.

Section 29, read with the Schedule to the Equality Act, provides an illustrative list of practices that “are or may be unfair, that are widespread and that need to be addressed” (section 29(1)). Clearly such a practice would include not making provision for candidates whose disabilities place them at a disadvantage to the other candidates.

The ground of discrimination on the basis of disability is particularly relevant to this document. A review of what amounts to a disability for the purposes of the Constitution and the Equality Act is appropriate at this point.

2. Disability

The scope of disabilities protected by the Constitution and the Equality Act is still one of debate. It is, however, useful to have regard of other legislation governing disability.

The Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities (GN 1345 in GG23702 of

August 2002) (“the Code”) provides some guidance as to what is meant by disability. The Code defines a “mental impairment” as “a clinically recognised condition or illness that affects a person's thought processes, judgement or emotions”. It also recognises that “some impairments are so easily controlled, corrected or lessened, that they have no limiting effects”. The purpose of this provision is to exclude conditions which can be neutralised through physical aids or controlled by medical treatment from the definition of disability. The Code also allows for an “assessment [to] be done by a suitably qualified [person] if there is uncertainty as to whether an impairment may be substantially limiting”.

ANNEXURE 3. REFERENCES

Flanagan, B. Judicial rights talk: Defects in the liberal challenge to constitutional review. *South African Journal on Human Rights*, (22) Part 2, 2006, 173–196.

Office of the Deputy President, Integrated National Disability Strategy White Paper, November 1997.

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Scott, S.S. Coming to terms with the “otherwise qualified” student with a learning disability, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 23(7), 1990, 398–405.

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Legal opinion: Webber Wentzel Bowens, January 2005.

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ANNEXURE 4: APPLICATION FORM APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL CONCESSION

• INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE (IAC)

PLEASE READ AND TICK IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, BEFORE PROCEEDING

- ☐ This form must be lodged at the offices of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants no later than **the dates as stipulated on the SAICA website** (regardless of whether the candidate registers for the IAC written in first or second sitting of that year) of the year preceding the year in which the IAC is to be written. E-mail to support@saica.co.za.
- ☐ Prior to completing this form, please familiarise yourself with SAICA's Special Concessions Policy.
- ☐ In order to receive full consideration by SAICA, this application must be fully supported by suitable medical or other evidence (as indicated in the SAICA Special Concession Policy – updated August 2020). Applications will be declined if candidates do not provide sufficient and relevant supporting evidence. The panel will only consider the submitted evidence.
- ☐ I acknowledge that SAICA may collect and process my personal information in accordance to SAICA's Data Protection Notice and data protection policies and procedures, available on our website: <http://www.saica.co.za>. I further consent that SAICA and/or its representative/s may process my personal information accordingly and may contact me via email and SMS
- ☐ I consent to SAICA and/or its representatives disseminating said information to relevant education institutions, SAICA service providers and stakeholders where SAICA deems it appropriate, for the purpose/s of communicating relevant programmes, courses, events and related matters. (The relevant institutions, service providers and stakeholders refers to your PDGA University, Training Office, Board Course and Professional Programme Providers). SAICA may collect and process my personal information in accordance to SAICA's Data Protection Notice and data protection policies and procedures, available on our website: <http://www.saica.co.za>.

APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL CONCESSION FOR SITTING (date)		
1. PERSONAL INFORMATION		
Title		
Surname		
First name		
Contact telephone numbers	Work:	
	Home:	
	Cell:	
Email address		
Postal address		
2. DETAILS OF CONDITION		
2.1 Name of disability / impairment		
2.2 Duration of impairment	Long term (indefinite)	

	Short term (this year only)	
2.3 Indicate the type of disability	Learning disability	
	Physical disability	
2.4 Briefly describe how the disability impacts on your ability to successfully complete the examination		
2.5 Describe the type of concession sought, example a scribe, use of a computer, special printing, etc.		
3. DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION		
Please list all reports and other supporting documentation included in support of your application.		
3.1 Medical reports and records		
	Name of practitioner or specialist	Date of report
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
3.2 Previous concessions granted		
	Name of institution	Date of examination
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
4. CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE AND DATE		

All supporting documentation must be submitted along with this application form in order for SAICA to consider your application. Should you not provide sufficient supporting evidence, SAICA may decline your application for a special concession. The onus is on you, the applicant, to provide sufficient and relevant information to support the application.

SAICA cannot contact other persons to obtain or confirm information on your behalf; it is your responsibility to supply all supporting documentation, refer to paragraph 3.12 of the SAICA Special Concession Policy.

I confirm that the above information is true and correct and that I have read and understood the SAICA policy with regard to special concessions for examinations.

Signature

Date.....

SAICA will advise you via email of the extent of the special concession granted, if any. You will be required to sign a letter confirming you agree with the terms of the special concession granted and to email this back to SAICA prior to the examination being written.

ANNEXURE 5: TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS DURING PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Where indicated, the following are examples of assessments which could be utilised during psycho- educational assessment:

1. Untimed and timed writing tasks: candidate to write about a formal topic within a period of time (20-minutes would be suitable). When the time expires, allow the candidate to complete the task but using a different coloured pen. Ensure this additional time is noted. Compare the pace and quality of writing with and without the extra time.
2. Timed and untimed typing task: as above. Ensure all editing tools are disabled on the computer. Only a word-processing programme (such as MS Word) will be allowed.
3. Reading: age-appropriate where possible
 - a. Untimed word reading assessments include: WIAT-II or WIAT-III, WRAT-4: complete for familiar words and decoding of unfamiliar words
 - b. Timed word reading: TOWRE-2 (Sight Word and Phonemic Decoding subtests)
4. Reading comprehension: DAT-L Reading Comprehension subtest (use Grade 12 or first year norms: allow the candidate to complete the subtest with extra time if needed and compare scores with and without extra time), WIAT-II or WIAT-III
5. Mathematical competence: WRAT-4/ WIAT-II or WIAT-III

Physical disability assessments are typically conducted by an **occupational therapist**. Examples of assessments that may be used for physical disability may include the following:

Hand specific injury/pathology assessment may include but not limited to:

- Musculoskeletal evaluation including
 - Sensation/proprioception
 - Muscle strength
 - Range of motion
 - Atrophy/oedema (include photographs where indicated)
 - Grips and grasps
- Grip and/or pinch strength testing
- Timed speed writing test
- Standardised fine motor assessment such as:
 - Purdue Peg Board,
 - PCE hand function test
 - Minnesota Rate of Manipulation Test
 - Grooved pegboard test

Chronic medical conditions including chronic pain may include but not limited to:

- Functional capacity evaluation such as WorkWell, VALPAR, Ergoscience ○
Musculoskeletal evaluation ○ Postural and positional tolerance testing ○
General mobility and agility
○ Hand function testing where applicable
- Comment on physical endurance (particularly sitting tolerance)
- Self-report questionnaires relevant to condition being evaluated
- Impact of chronic condition on cognitive functioning. Testing may include assessments such as RBANS, Ruff 2&7, CTMT, BADS, H-CAT, General Clerical Test, TIPS, WRAML2

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